

ORIGINAL

Myocardial function in long distance runners: Assessment by echocardiography, tissue Doppler and speckle tracking

*Función y deformación miocárdica en corredores de fondo.
Evaluación mediante ecocardiografía y speckle-tracking.*

Jaume Pons, MD; Josep Francesc Forteza, MD, PhD; Daniel Rivero, MD; Marta Aceña, MD; Antonio Rodríguez, MD; Alfredo Gómez, MD, PhD; Carlos Fernández-Palomeque, MD; Armando Bethencourt, MD, PhD.

Cardiology Department, Hospital Universitario Son Espases, Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

Correspondence

Josep Francesc Forteza MD-PhD
Cardiology Department, Hospital Universitario Son Espases.
C/Valldemossa, 79 · 07120 · Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Telephone number: 871 205 083 / 639 049 075
e-mail: jfortezalbert@gmail.com

Recibido: 25 – IX – 2013

Aceptado: 3 – XII – 2013

doi: 10.3306/MEDICINABALEAR.29.01.25

Resumen

Introducción y objetivos: El ejercicio físico provoca respuestas adaptativas y cambios morfológico-funcionales en el corazón del atleta. El objetivo del presente estudio es caracterizar dichos cambios mediante ecocardiografía convencional y las nuevas técnicas de deformación miocárdica mediante speckle tracking.

Material y métodos: Se estudiaron prospectivamente a 68 varones, 38 corredores de fondo (42 ± 8 años), y 30 controles (40 ± 7 años). Se les realizó estudio ecocardiográfico convencional modo M, 2D y doppler así como parámetros de deformación miocárdica mediante speckle tracking a nivel de eje corto basal (B), medio (M), apical (Ap) y planos apicales 4 y 2 cámaras de ventrículo izquierdo (VI) y ventrículo derecho (VD). Se midió strain (S) y strain rate (SR) longitudinal, radial y circunferencial así como la rotación (Rot) y el untwisting (UT) a nivel basal y apical.

Resultados: Todos los sujetos presentaron función cardíaca dentro de la normalidad. Se observaron mayor fracción de eyección (FE) así como mayores volúmenes ventriculares en el grupo de atletas. No se hallaron diferencias en los parámetros del anillo Mitral. Los niveles de S longitudinal y circunferencial así como la torsión (Tor) de VI fue mayor en el grupo de los deportistas ($p=0.02$, $p=0.005$ y $p=0.03$ respectivamente). Se observó menor S radial en el grupo de atletas. El tamaño, el TAPSE y la deformación longitudinal del VD presentaron diferencias estadísticamente significativas ($p=0.01$, 0.002 y 0.006 respectivamente).

Conclusiones: Los niveles de deformación miocárdica valorados mediante strain longitudinal y circunferencial son mayores en los atletas así como la torsión ventricular. El mayor grado de deformación longitudinal, circunferencial y la mayor torsión puede representar una respuesta adaptativa al ejercicio.

Palabras clave: Ecocardiografía. Ejercicio. Strain. Torsión ventricular. Deformación ventricular

Abstract

Background: Regular intense physical exercise causes cardiovascular adaptations as well as functional and morphological changes in the athlete's heart. The aim of the present study is to characterize those changes using conventional echocardiography and new speckle tracking techniques to study myocardial deformation.

Methods: 68 men were studied. 38 long distance runners (42 ± 8 years), and 30 sedentary controls (40 ± 7 years). Standard transthoracic echocardiography was performed: M mode, 2D, tissue and colour Doppler. Deformation parameters were studied by speckle tracking at short axis view basal (B), medium (M) and apical (Ap) levels and apical 4 and 2 chamber view of the left ventricle (LV) and right ventricle (RV). Longitudinal, radial and circumferential strain (S) and strain rate (SR) were measured as well as rotation (Rot) and untwisting (UT) at basal and apical levels.

Results: Left ventricular ejection fraction and volumes were significantly higher in the athlete group. There were no differences in conventional diastolic parameters. Longitudinal and circumferential left ventricular strain and torsion were higher in the athlete group ($p=0.02$, $p=0.005$ and $p=0.03$ respectively). In addition, radial strain was lower in the athlete group. Right ventricular diameters, tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion (TAPSE) and longitudinal deformation were significantly higher in the athlete group ($p=0.01$, 0.002 y 0.006 respectively).

Conclusion: Myocardial deformation parameters, studied by longitudinal and circumferential strain, as well as ventricular torsion are greater in athletes as compared to sedentary individuals. This increased myocardial longitudinal and circumferential deformation and ventricular torsion might represent an adaptive response to regular intense physical exercise.

Keywords: Echocardiography. Exercise. Strain. Ventricular torsion. Myocardial deformation

Introduction

Regular intense physical exercise is associated with a series of changes in myocardial morphology and function which have been described as the “athlete’s heart”¹⁻⁵. These changes include an increase in left ventricular (LV) chamber size, wall thickness, ventricular mass and stroke volume. This remodelling reflects myocardial adaptation to adverse hemodynamic conditions during intense physical exercise.

Longitudinal, circumferential and radial deformation studies, as well as myocardial torsion and untwisting by speckle tracking techniques allow a different approach to understanding systolic and diastolic myocardial physiology⁶⁻¹⁰. The rotational movement in myocardial torsion and untwisting is caused by the helical disposition of the myocardial fibers already described by Torrent Guasp¹¹⁻¹². This movement constitutes an important aspect of ventricular biomechanics, which allow the high pressures generated to be homogeneously distributed along the myocardial wall¹¹⁻¹⁵.

Deformation parameters can be expected to be different in athlete and sedentary myocardium due to their relationship with both systolic and diastolic heart function and structure.

This study’s primary aim is to compare the athlete’s heart with that of sedentary individuals using a classic echocardiographic¹⁶ approach as well as new myocardial deformation and torsion study techniques. A secondary aim is to describe the biomechanical changes of the heart associated with regular intense exercise.

Methods

Two groups were studied: the athlete group and a control group of sedentary individuals. The athlete group was comprised of healthy, male long distance runners with a training program of more than 40km per week for at least the last three years, between 20 and 55 years of age. Exclusion criteria were cardiovascular or metabolic disorders, cardiovascular risk factors or any pharmacological treatment. The control group consisted of healthy, sedentary individuals of similar age. Sedentary was defined as a type of lifestyle with no or very irregular physical activity that includes a majority of time sitting or resting.

Study inclusion was performed by clinical history, physical examination, blood pressure measurement and a 12 lead-ECG. A code number was randomly assigned to each participant. Echocardiograms were performed and later interpreted off-line without knowledge to the interpreter as to which study group the subject belonged. Thereby, the study was blind to the investigator interpreting the echocardiograms.

Thirty-eight athletes and thirty sedentary controls were included.

Standard transthoracic echocardiography was performed according to the guidelines of the American Society of Echocardiography and the European Society of Echocardiography¹⁶, on Vivid 7 Dimension GE Medical Systems, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The images were digitally stored and analyzed off-line (EchoPac PC, GE Vingmed). The filters were set to exclude high-frequency signals and the Nyquist limit was adjusted to a range of 10 to 15 cm/s. Gain and sample volume were minimized to obtain clear tissue signal. TDI Doppler was used to measure the early diastolic velocity (E') of the mitral annulus at septal and lateral level.

The frame rate for TDI measurements was >100/s. For 2 dimensional (2D) and 2D strain analysis, we used frame rates of 70/s to 90/s. Transmitral pw-Doppler inflow was measured to obtain E peak, A peak, and E/A ratio. The E deceleration time (DT) was derived from the transmitral pw-Doppler inflow at the tips of the mitral leaflets. E' peak and A' peak were measured at the lateral and septal mitral anulus.

TDI measurements were assessed in the apical 4-chamber view. 2D strain variables were measured in the parasternal short-axis at basal, medium and apical levels and apical 4-chamber and 2-chamber views. For 2D and TDI measurements, 3 beats were stored and analyzed.

As a marker of right heart function, tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion (TAPSE) was measured.

Measurement of myocardial deformation parameters (strain imaging) by speckle tracking was done off-line using the EchoPac Dimension 06 at B, M and Ap level in the short axis view as well as from apical 4 and 2 chambers view. Longitudinal, radial and circumferential strain and strain rate were analyzed as well as rotation and untwisting. The initial yellow point was adjusted to the beginning of the QRS. Torsion was defined as the net difference between Rot Ap and Rot B (**Table I**). In the apical four-chamber view, the endocardium of the right ventricle (RV) was manually drawn in end-systole thereafter the endocardial borders were automatically tracked throughout the cardiac cycle. Once approved by the reading analyst, the software displayed longitudinal strain and strain rate for the respective segments and the global longitudinal strain and strain rate. (**Figure 3**).

Statistical analysis

All numeric variables were expressed as mean \pm Standard Deviation (SD). Statistical and power analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 15 Statistics software. The comparisons among athletes and controls were performed

Table I: Myocardial deformation parameters analyzed.

	Basal	Medium	Apical
Short axis	Rot, T-Rot, UT, T-UT, S cir, SR cir, S rd, SR rd	S rd, SR syst. rd, SR dias rd.	Rot, T-Rot, UT, T-UT, S cir, SR cir, S rd, SR rd

Rot: Rotation, T-Rot: Rotation time, UT: Untwisting, T-UT: Time to untwisting, S cir: Circumferential strain, SRcir: Circumferential strain rate, S rd: Radial strain, SR rd: Radial strain rate.

	4C	2C	RV
Apical	S long, SR syst. Long, SR dias. Long.	S long, SR syst. Long, SR dias. Long.	S long, SR syst. Long, SR dias. Long.

S long: Longitudinal strain, SR syst. Long: Longitudinal systolic strain rate, SR dias. Long: Longitudinal diastolic strain rate.

Table II: Baseline characteristics of study participants.

	Athletes n=38	Controls n=30	p
Age	42±8	40±7	ns
BSA m ²	1.8±0.14	1.97±0.14	0.0001
BPs mmHg	128±12	129±10	ns
BPd mmHg	77±9	79±8	ns
ST mm	8.9±2.2	8.6±2.0	ns
PWT mm	8.4±1.4	8.5±1.7	ns
LV mass g	199±39	172±48	0.01
LVEDD mm	53±5	51±5	ns
LVESD mm	33±6	33±4	ns
EF (Teicholz)	67±8	65±7	ns
HR bpm	52±9	68±10	0.0001
Weight (Kg)	67.8±8	79.4±10	0.0001
ILV mass g/m ²	110±21	87±20	0.0001
LVOT mm	22±1.6	22±1.6	ns
TAPSE mm	23±3	21±3	0.0015
RVTd mm	37±7	33±6	0.01
LLVD mm	87±9	82±11	0.056
EF (S)	64±7	60±7	0.02
LVSvI ml/m ²	30±9	23±7	0.0005
LVDvI ml/m ²	82.7±17	57.0±13	0.0001
LAVI ml/m ²	34.5±9	21.4±7	0.0001

BSA: Body surface area, BPs: Systolic blood pressure, BPd: Diastolic blood pressure, ST: Septal thickness, PWT: Posterior wall thickness, LVEDD: Left ventricular end diastolic dimension, LVESD: Left ventricular end systolic dimension, EF(s): Ejection fraction (Simpson's). LAVI: Left atrial volume index, LVDvI: Left ventricle diastolic volume index, LVSvI: Left ventricle systolic volume index, LLVD: Longitudinal left ventricular dimension. ILV mass: Indexed left ventricular mass, LVOT: Left ventricle outflow tract, TAPSE: tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion, RVTd: Right ventricle transverse dimension.

using Student's unpaired t-test. The correlation analysis was performed using Pearson's coefficient. Multivariate analysis was conducted by logistic regression method.

Results

No differences were found in general baseline characteristics (age, blood pressure) between the two groups. No differences were found in left ventricular diameter and myocardial thickness but indexed left atrial and ventricular volumes and ventricular mass were greater in athletes. Ejection fraction calculated by Simpson's method was higher in athletes. All were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). (**Table II**).

Doppler hemodynamic parameters are represented in **Table III**. No statistically significant differences were

found except in heart rate and derived parameters such as E wave, E/A and LV outflow tract TVI (time velocity integral).

Myocardial deformation parameter analysis revealed that longitudinal strain from 4 and 2 chamber view was higher in the athlete's group ($21.2 \pm 3.1\%$ vs $19.6 \pm 2.7\%$), as well as circumferential strain at B level ($16.6 \pm 5.1\%$ vs $13.1 \pm 4.8\%$ $p=0.005$). In contrast, radial strain rate at M level was lower in the athlete group (1.64 ± 0.43 vs 1.98 ± 0.69 $p=0.01$).

Basal rotation was higher in athletes ($6.0 \pm 2.8^\circ$ vs $4.3 \pm 2.3^\circ$ $p=0.007$) and UT B was higher in athletes without reaching statistical significance. (70 ± 22 vs 52 ± 18 $p=0.06$). At apical level no differences were found. Myocardial torsion was greater in the athlete group at the

expense of Rot B ($19.7 \pm 7.2^\circ$ vs $15.8 \pm 7.3^\circ$ $p=0.03$). (**Table IV**)

RV diameters were larger in the athlete group (37 ± 7 mm vs 33 ± 6 mm, $p=0.01$). Statistically significant differences were found in right heart function parameters. TAPSE was higher in the athlete's group (23 ± 3 mm vs 21 ± 3 mm, $p=0.002$) as well as longitudinal strain ($24.0 \pm 3.4\%$ vs $21.3 \pm 5.4\%$, $p=0.006$). No differences were found in RV systolic and diastolic strain rate. (**Table V**)

Ventricular torsion analysis showed a positive correlation with ejection fraction, circumferential strain at basal (R: 0,41, $p=0.01$) and apical level (R: 0,77, $p=0.0001$) as well as circumferential strain rate at apical level (R: 0,83, $p=0.0001$).

Multivariate logistic regression analysis showed indexed volumes, circumferential basal strain and body surface area as independent variables (**Table VI**).

Discussion

The results of the present study evidence morphological and functional differences in the athlete's heart. Morphological adaptations have been described previously: high-

her ventricular and atrial volumes and ventricular mass in athlete's heart as well as greater ejection fraction measured by Simpson's method¹⁷⁻²⁰. The main findings of the present study are the differences in deformation parameters, greater in longitudinal and circumferential strain but lower in radial strain rate in the athlete group as compared with sedentary controls. These deformation parameter changes in the athlete's heart could represent an increased ventricular efficiency as well as increased myocardial contractile reserve. Contrary to other findings¹⁹, myocardial torsion/untwisting was greater in the athlete's heart, which is congruent with the higher circumferential strain and reinforces the idea of a greater intrinsic contractility and greater global myocardial functionality of the athlete's heart. The lower radial strain found at rest might be explained by the need for less transverse deformation to reach adequate levels of cardiovascular function in the athlete's heart. The trained heart will have this reserve in radial deformation that can be utilized during exercise. The athlete's heart will have the possibility to improve and optimize LV function during exercise by incrementing radial deformation. Differences in apical rotation were probably not statistically significant due to a methodological-technical difficulty during the echocardiographic study to identify the true apex in the parasternal short axis view. Analyzing deformation parameters in short axis views that might have been medially displaced and falsely interpreted as true apex could have influenced the rotation results. LV Torsion was measurable in every subject but we estimate that in about 15% of the studies we weren't able to reach the true apex. Contrary to what was expected when analyzing diastolic function parameters, no differences were found in mitral annulus velocity, which suggests a similar grade of relaxation at rest, although different results might be found during exercise. On the other hand, longitudinal diastolic strain rate was higher among athletes, representing higher velocities to baseline length recovery indicative of better relaxation. In the multivariate analysis, circumferential strain at basal level is an independent variable not related to athletes' higher left ventricular volume index. Left ventricular Torsion has a relation with basal circumferential strain. Both were higher in athletes and it is possible that are not related to the higher cardiac cavities volumes.

This study shows that physical exercise not only affects the left ventricle. Statistically significant differences were

Figure 1: Left ventricle longitudinal strain and strain rate from apical 4 chamber view.

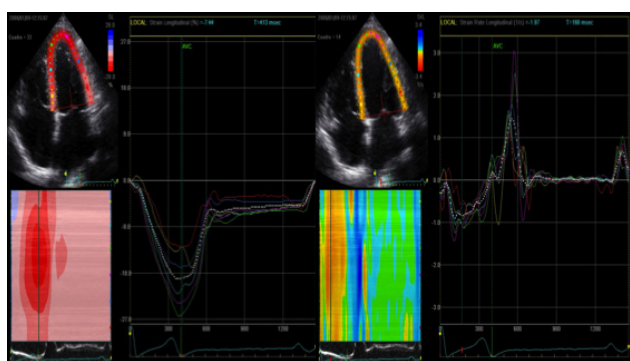


Figure 2: Left ventricle apical and basal rotation. Basal and apical circumferential strain and strain rate.

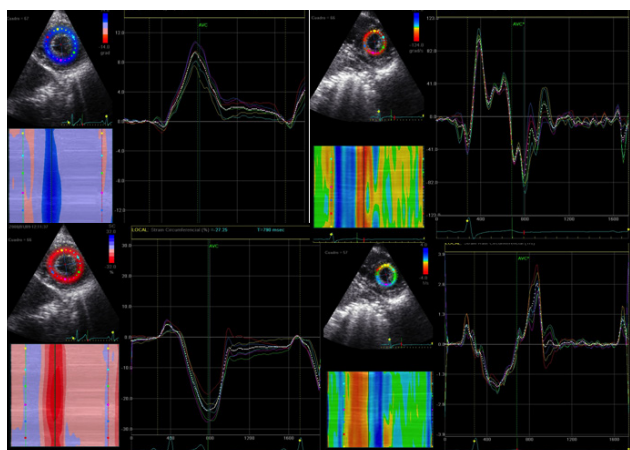
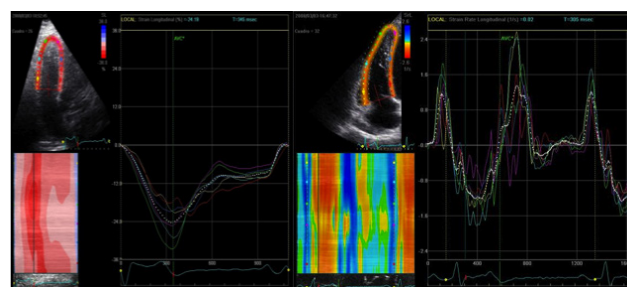


Figure 3: Right ventricle longitudinal strain and strain rate from apical 4 chamber view.



found in right heart size, function parameters (TAPSE) and RV deformation parameters in the athlete group. Physical exercise also affects the right heart producing increased

size, systolic function and longitudinal deformation, which contribute to the athlete's heart better efficiency at rest and probably during exercise²⁰.

Table III: Results hemodynamic/Doppler parameters.

	Athletes	Controls	p
E cm/s	74±13	65±13	0.006
A cm/s	48±12	49±11	ns
E/A	1.6±0.4	1.4±0.3	0.01
DT ms	168±37	185±49	ns
IVRT ms	102±24	96±11	ns
LVOT TVI cm	23.8±3	18.9±3	0.0001
C.I. L/min/m²	2.6±0.6	2.4±0.5	ns
Eam cm/s	9.7±2.0	9.5±2.0	ns
Eal cm/s	14.2±2.7	13.2±2.9	ns
Eap cm/s	11.9±2.2	11.3±2.3	ns
VpE cm/s	84±51	72±48	ns
PVs cm/s	57±12	54±13	ns
PVd cm/s	50±9	46±10	ns
S/D vp	1.2±0.3	1.2±0.3	ns
PVa cm/s	25±6	26±5	ns
E/Eap	6.3±1.3	5.9±1.3	ns

DT: Deceleration time. IVRT: Isovolumic relaxation time. LVOT TVI: Left ventricular outflow tract time velocity integral. C.I.: Cardiac index. Eap: Mean value of medial and lateral mitral annulus velocity. VpE: Mitral inflow propagation velocity. Eam: Medial mitral annulus velocity. Eal: Lateral mitral annulus velocity. PVs: Pulmonary vein systolic velocity. PVd: Pulmonary vein diastolic velocity. PVa: Pulmonary vein atrial flow reversal velocity.

Table IV: Myocardial deformation parameters.

	Athletes	Controls	p
B Rot °	6.0±2.8	4.3±2.3	0.007
A Rot °	13.7±7.3	11.5±6.4	ns
B UT %/s	70±22	52±18	0.06
A UT %/s	88±43	89±46	ns
B cir S %	16.6±5.1	13.1±4.8	0.005
TOR °	19.7±7.2	15.8±7.3	0.03
SR sys M /s	1.64±0.43	1.98±0.69	0.015
Long S 4c %	20.5±3.1	19.1±2.6	0.05
SR dias lon4c /s	1.49±0.25	1.32±0.32	0.02
Long S 2c %	21.9±3.1	20.1±2.8	0.02
SR dias long2c /s	1.53±0.27	1.33±0.32	0.006
RV LS %	24.0±3.4	21.3±5.4	0.01

B Rot: Basal rotation, A Rot: Apical rotation, BUT: Basal untwisting, AUT: Apical untwisting, BcirS: Basal circumferential strain, TOR: Torsion, SR sys M: Medial systolic strain rate, LongS 4c: Longitudinal strain four chambers view, SR dias lon4c: Longitudinal strain rate four chambers view, Long S 2c: Longitudinal strain two chambers view, SR dias long 2c: Longitudinal diastolic strain rate two chambers view, RV LS: Right ventricle longitudinal strain.

Table V: Right ventricle study.

	RVTD	TAPSE	RVLS	RVsysSR	RVdiasSR
Athletes	37 ±7 mm	23±3mm	24.0±3.4%	1.20±0.25 /s	1.33±0.2 /s
Control	33 ±6 mm	21±3mm	21.3±5.4%	1.17±0.25 /s	1.25±0.3 /s
	P=0.01	P=0.002	P=0.006	ns	ns

RVTD: Right ventricle transverse dimension. RVLS: Right ventricular longitudinal strain. RVsysSR: Right ventricular longitudinal systolic strain rate. RVdiasSR: Right ventricular longitudinal diastolic strain rate.

Table V: Right ventricle study.

	RVTD	TAPSE	RVLS	RVsysSR	RVdiasSR
Athletes	37 ±7 mm	23±3mm	24.0±3.4%	1.20±0.25 /s	1.33±0.2 /s
Control	33 ±6 mm	21±3mm	21.3±5.4%	1.17±0.25 /s	1.25±0.3 /s
	P=0.01	P=0.002	P=0.006	ns	ns

RVTD: Right ventricle transverse dimension. RVLS: Right ventricular longitudinal strain. RVsysSR: Right ventricular longitudinal systolic strain rate. RVdiasSR: Right ventricular longitudinal diastolic strain rate.

Table VI: Multivariate analysis.

		'p'	OR	CI 95,0% for OR	
				Inferior	Superior
	IN_LVIDd	0.047	1.095	1.001	1.198
	St_circ_B	0.054	1.169	0.998	1.370
	LAVI	0.024	1.153	1.019	1.305
	BSA	0.040	0.002	0.000	0.762

IN_LVIDd: Indexed left ventricular end-diastolic internal diameter. St_circ_B: Circumferential strain at basal level. LAVI: Left atrial volume index. BSA:Body surface area.

References

- Pelliccia A, Culasso F, Di Paolo FM, Maron BJ. Physiologic left ventricular cavity dilatation in elite athletes. *Ann Intern Med*. 1999;130:23-31.
- Abernethy WB, Choo JK, Hutter AM. Echocardiographic characteristics of professional football players. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2003;41:280-4.
- Pluim BM, Zwinderman AH, Van der Laarse A, van der Wall EE. The athlete's heart. A meta-analysis of cardiac structure and function. *Circulation*. 2000;101:336-44.
- Rawlins J, Bhan A, Sarma S. Left ventricular hypertrophy in athletes. *European Journal of Echocardiography*. 2009;10: 350-356.
- Ghorayeb N, Batlouni M, Pinto IM, Dioguardi GS. Left ventricular hypertrophy of athletes: adaptive physiologic response of the heart. *Arq Bras Cardiol*. 2005;85:191-7.
- Urheim S, Edvardsen T, Torp H, Angelsen B, Smiseth OA. Myocardial strain by Doppler echocardiography. Validation of a new method to quantify regional myocardial function. *Circulation* 2000; 102:1158-1164.
- Serri K, Reant P, Lafitte M, Berhouet M, Le Bouffos V, Roudaut R, Laffite S. Global and regional myocardial function quantification by two dimensional strain. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2006; 47:1175-1181
- Helle-Valle T, Crosby J, Edvardsen T, Lyseggen E, Amundsen BH, Smith HJ, Rosen BD, Lima JA, Torp H, Ihlen H, Smiseth OA. New noninvasive method for assessment of left ventricular rotation: speckle tracking echocardiography. *Circulation*. 2005;112:3149-56.
- Notomi Y, Martin-Miklovic MG, Oryszak SJ, Shiota T, Deserranno D, Popovic ZB, Garcia MJ, Greenberg NL, Thomas JD. Enhanced ventricular untwisting during exercise: a mechanistic manifestation of elastic recoil described by Doppler tissue imaging. *Circulation*. 2006;113:2524-33.
- Notomi Y, Lysyansky P, Setser RM, Shiota T, Popovic ZB, Martin-Miklovic MG, Weaver JA, Oryszak SJ, Greenberg NL, White RD, Thomas JD. Measurement of ventricular torsion by two-dimensional ultrasound speckle tracking imaging. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2005;45:2034-41.
- Torrent-Guasp F. La estructuración macroscópica del miocardio ventricular. *Rev Esp Cardiol*. 1980;33:265-87.
- Torrent-Guasp F. Estructura y función del corazón. *Rev Esp Cardiol*. 1998; 51:91-102.
- Buckberg G, Coghlan H, Torrent-Guasp F. The structure and function of the helical heart and its buttress wrapping. V. Anatomic and physiologic considerations in the healthy and failing heart. *Semin Thorac Cardiovasc Surg*. 2001;13:358-85.
- Taber LA, Yang M, Podszus WW. Mechanics of ventricular torsion. *J Biomech*. 1996;29:745-52.
- Notomi Y, Srinath G, Shiota T, Martin-Miklovic MG, Beachler L, Howell K, Oryszak SJ, Deserranno DG, Freed AD, Greenberg NL, Younoszai A, Thomas JD. Maturational and adaptive modulation of left ventricular torsional biomechanics: Doppler tissue imaging observation from infancy to adulthood. *Circulation*. 2006;113:2534-41.
- Lang RM, Bierig M, Devereux RB, Flachskampf FA, Foster E, Pellikka PA, Picard MH, Roman MJ, Seward J, Shanewise JS, Solomon SD, Spencer KT, Sutton MS, Stewart WJ. Chamber Quantification Writing Group; American Society of Echocardiography's Guidelines and Standards Committee; European Association of Echocardiography. Recommendations for chamber quantification: a report from the American Society of Echocardiography's Guidelines and Standards Committee and the Chamber Quantification Writing Group, developed in conjunction with the European Association of Echocardiography, a branch of the European Society of Cardiology. *J Am Soc Echocardiogr*. 2005;18:1440-63.
- Pelliccia A, Culasso F, Di Paolo FM, Maron BJ. Physiologic left ventricular cavity dilatation in elite athletes. *Ann Intern Med* 1999; 130:23-31.
- George K, Shave R, Oxborough D, Cable T, Dawson E, Artis N, Gaze D, Hew-Butler T, Sharwood K, Noakes T. Left ventricular wall segment motion after ultra-endurance exercise in humans assessed by myocardial speckle tracking. *Eur J Echocardiogr* 2009;10:238-43.
- Zócalo Y, Guevara E, Bia D, Guicacche E, Pessana F, Peidron R, Armentano RL. La reducción en el nivel y la velocidad de la torsión ventricular puede asociarse a incremento en la eficiencia ventricular izquierda: evaluación mediante ecografía speckle-tracking. *Rev Esp Cardiol*. 2008;61(7):705-13.
- Stefani L, Pedrizzetti G, De Luca A, Mercuri R, Innocenti G, Galanti G. Real-time evaluation of longitudinal peak systolic strain (speckle tracking measurement) in left and right ventricles of athletes. *Cardiovascular Ultrasound* 2009; 7:17.
- Jensen-Ustad M, Bouvier F, Nejat M, Saltin B, Brodin LA. Left ventricular function in endurance runners during exercise. *Acta Physiol Scand*. 1998;164:167-72.
- Neilan TG, Danita MY, Douglas PS, Marshall JE, Halpern EF, Lawlor D, Picard MH, Wood MJ. Persistent and reversible cardiac dysfunction among amateur marathon runners. *European heart Journal* 2006; 27:1079-1084.